



## Distinct population segment (DPS) policy (61 FR 4722; 2/7/96)

- In 1996, NMFS and FWS published a DPS policy for all other vertebrate species
- The agencies consider two criteria when determining whether a population segment qualifies as a DPS:
  - **Discreteness** of the population segment in relation to the remainder of the species to which it belongs; and
  - **Significance** of the population segment to the species to which it belongs
- Some listed DPSs include Atlantic salmon populations and 5 populations of Atlantic sturgeon



## **Discreteness**

- Markedly separate from other populations of the same taxon as a consequence of physical, physiological, ecological, or behavioral factors or if it is delimited by international governmental boundaries. Genetic differences between the population segments being considered may be used to evaluate discreteness.



## **Discreteness (continued)**

International boundaries within the geographical range of the species may be used to delimit a distinct population segment if differences in the control of exploitation of the species, management of the species habitat, the conservation status of the species, or regulatory mechanisms differ between countries that would influence the conservation status of the population segment.



## Significance

- 1) Persistence of the population segment in an unusual or unique ecological setting;
- 2) Evidence that loss of the population segment would result in a significant gap in the range of the taxon;
- 3) Evidence that the discrete population segment represents the only surviving natural occurrence of a taxon that may be more abundant elsewhere as an introduced population outside its historic range; and
- 3) Evidence that the population segment differs markedly from other populations of the species in its genetic characteristics.



## **Discretionary use**

NMFS has discretion with regard to identifying and listing DPSs, and may decide to list at the taxonomic species or subspecies level if it chooses to. In fact, in a congressional report following the 1978 amendments that introduced the “distinct population segment” provision, Congress warned the Services to use this provision sparingly.